



Testimony for Public Hearing
Judiciary Committee
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H.B. 6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Liz Gustafson, and I am the State Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut. NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut is committed to protecting and expanding reproductive freedom, and we believe in a future where Connecticut residents and their families can not only survive, but thrive in safe and healthy communities. Bodily autonomy & reproductive freedom cannot be achieved without addressing the root causes of violence and harm, and as cross-movement allies of CT Against Gun Violence, **I testify in strong support of H.B. 6355 An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders.**

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass an Extreme Risk Protection Order law, in 1999. It offers a means of last resort to temporarily remove firearms from individuals judged to be at risk of imminent harm to themselves or others. Firearm suicide accounts for up to two-thirds of gun deaths, and is the second leading cause of suicide in our State, and Extreme Risk Protection Orders have been proven to aid in the prevention of firearm suicide and mass shootings. H.B. 6355 would strengthen existing law, thus saving more lives in the following ways:

- Require a court hearing to demonstrate that the risk of imminent harm no longer exists before firearms are returned. Presently, at risk persons can simply request that their firearms be returned upon expiration of the order, which lasts up to one year.
- Allow a risk protection order to prohibit an individual from buying a firearm if that individual is at risk of imminent harm to self or others and has shown an interest or intent to acquire a firearm, even if they do not currently possess one. Currently, ERPOs can only be issued against someone who is currently in possession of a gun.
- Allow family, household members and healthcare professionals to directly petition the court for a risk protection order. Currently only law enforcement and states' attorneys can do so. Twelve states [allow](#) family members to petition the courts directly; three states [allow](#) some categories of medical professionals to do so. This is a particularly important alternative for folks who are

reluctant to involve law enforcement at the outset, and for people who are concerned about the stigma surrounding the criminalization of gun ownership (i.e. stigmatizing a mental health condition, immigration status or wariness of police interaction). While our State's criminal court does preside over these hearings, a risk protection order does not create a criminal record.

As there are often warning signs preceding violent or suicidal behavior, this last-resort temporary removal measure with due process protections is an effective tool for reducing gun violence. While seemingly unrelated, reproductive freedom and efforts to prevent gun violence are inherently connected. If we pride ourselves on leading the fight for reproductive freedom, we must do all that we can to protect bodily autonomy and ensure the safety of individuals, children, and families.

Individuals who fear gun violence, or have experienced gun violence, may be unable to make decisions about their lives and futures with the full dignity and autonomy that they deserve. H.B. 6355 is a viable policy that will strengthen existing law, and aid in fostering a future where people can live and raise their families in safe and healthy environments, free from the fear of violence.

I ask that you favorably report H.B. 6355 out of committee, so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen existing law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide.

Thank you for your consideration,

Liz Gustafson, MSW

State Director

NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut